

## Open Letter to Church Board

Date: March 31, 2014

To: Church Board:

Jimmye Saldivar, Chairman

Don Whitley, Secretary

Barb Scantlin, Elder Chair

Katie Spencer, V. Chair

Dorene Drake, Treasurer

Pat Whitley, Deacons

Oaks Christian Church

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Houston, Texas 77018-1918

From: Charlie Dean, church member

Ladies and Gentlemen:

**We are missing an opportunity with our music ministry.** I do not have the gift of musicianship, but I do know when I entrain to a musical beat. When it happens it is fun, exciting, and energizing. It makes me feel that I am really part of what is going on around me. I believe we serve a creative God. He has given us a gift of expression through music. It is a gift we can use to praise, show feeling for a friend, celebrate, and grow in the activity or endeavor that we are engaged in. The world would be boring without it.

Sometimes I look around the sanctuary to see how many and what kinds of people are present. Membership and attendance is low. I believe we have perhaps three teenagers; their mothers make them come. We might have one Young Adult (18 – 30). Everyone else is quite a bit older. I am 62 and most people are older than me.

Some leaders have talked of “old music” as opposed to “new music” (sometimes called contemporary music). Singing “new songs” does not in and of itself produce rhythm. It does not matter when the music was composed or prepared. Strumming extra hard on a guitar does not in and of itself produce rhythm. Screaming loudly in and of itself does not produce rhythm. Having an expensive projector system does not in and of itself produce rhythm.

Certain kinds of chord progressions just sound good together and produce rhythm. If you do a search on YouTube for Gospel Music you can find a lot of songs that are fun, easy, entraining, and motivating.

Syncopation is a general term for a disturbance or interruption of the regular flow of rhythm. It involves a placement of rhythmic stresses or accents where they would not normally occur and in some way that is unexpected. Much of OCC’s music is syncopated in such a way that the beat is difficult to discern.

Many of the songs on Sunday morning are un-sing-able by most mediocre musicians and mediocre singers. We can hold a book, or look at a screen, and make an effort to sing some parts and mumble the rest. The music frequently lacks discernable rhythm and beat and has a weak entrainment effect. Music with rhythm and beat that has a strong entrainment effect is a principle prerequisite for attracting Young Adults. We cannot wait for 10 or 15 Young Adults to appear some Sunday, and then figure out how to serve and engage them. We must have that set up in advance, and this includes music.

If you make it easy and fun for people to sing, they will. Imagine a movie theater where the movies repel more young folks than they attract. Think about a square dance club where the beat of the music is difficult to decipher. Think of a comedy show that lacks comedy.

I will discuss our music from four particular Sundays: On **February 23, 2014** we had two songs with significant rhythm: Leaning on the Everlasting Arms and What a Friend We Have in Jesus. The rest of

the music failed to enhance the viability of OCC. On **March 2, 2014** we had no music that enhanced the viability of OCC. On **March 23, 2014** we had the songs "I could Sing of Your Love Forever," "Shine, Jesus, Shine," and "Sanctuary." The music was syncopated such that the beat was difficult to discern. This may be OK for advanced singers and advanced musicians, but it lacks the motivation and animation that OCC so desperately needs. Later one song was presented by the choir and, while I appreciate the effort, it added nothing to the viability of OCC. We had the songs "Have Thine Own Way, Lord," "Come, Share the Lord," "Worship the King," and "Oh, How I Love Jesus." These songs had a beat that was easy enough to follow. However, animation and enthusiasm was lacking. On **March 30, 2014** the attendance was better. All of the songs had a beat that could be followed. However none of the music injected excitement or induced significant desire for activity. Music with a strong beat and entrainment effect has **enthusiasm that lingers after the music ceases**; there was none of that.

We would not expect any skilled worker to build or perform without proper tools. There are thousands of pieces of music that our Music Program committee could select from. I urge our Music Program committee to give our music director the tools he needs to accomplish the task before him. Our music director is talented and energetic, but he cannot perform a miracle with sorry music.

OCC has good lighting, projector and screen, a/c, fellowship hall, kitchen, WiFi, extra space, and a good location. With such attributes, surely church leaders have wondered why Young Adults have chosen not frequent OCC. Over the years Young Adults have visited OCC; few have chosen to participate on a regular basis. **I do not believe the Board should blame this on anything other than itself.**

We have no mechanism in place to produce music with rhythm, enthusiasm, and animation. Animation is the act, process, or result of imparting life, interest, spirit, motion, or activity. OCC needs this to attract new members and especially Young Adults.

Following are three music examples of the same song. The first and second (same song) show a beat that is easy and fun to follow; there is a strong entrainment effect. In the third example (some similar lyrics) the beat is difficult to follow and there is weak entrainment effect. The music of the third example is so syncopated and complicated that mediocre musicians and mediocre singers cannot follow the beat. The first two examples would be fun at OCC.

Up Above My Head [Live]  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UK6A7N-WDk8>

Sister Rosetta Tharpe - Up Above My Head  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeaBNAXfHfQ>

up above my head by kirk franklin  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDpJpOAAb9E>

**The viability of OCC is at stake.** We are deceiving ourselves if we believe OCC can be effective with practically no Young Adults. OCC is not capable of growth and development if Young Adults continue to be repelled more than they are attracted.

Because of your positions as officers you, and only you, can pave the way for progress. It seems to me that acquiring new members and more money is almost on the doorstep, if we will use fun music and exploit information technology. Our church leaders, in their professional lives, seem to have been successful. They appear to be good people. I believe our membership and money problems can be resolved. It is the practical and ethical thing to do.

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